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T W O
DISCOURSES.

THE FIRST,
Of Evil-Speaking :

By His Grace,
JOHN, late Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

The Second, Of the
Government of the Thoughts :

By His Grace,
JOHN, Lord Archbishop of *Tork*.
Here
Both Preach'd before Their Majesties, 1694.

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T. W. O.
DISCOURSES

THE FIRST
OF Evil-Speaking:

BY THE REV. J. W. O.

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
IN THE PARISH OF ST. MARTIN'S, VINCEY LANE, LONDON.

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A
DISCOURSE
AGAINST
Evil-Speaking.

T I T. III. 2.

To speak evil of no man.



General Persuatives to Repen-
tance and a good Life, and
Invectives against Sin and
Wickedness at large, are cer-
tainly of good use to recom-
mend Religion and Virtue,
and to expose the deformity
and danger of a Vicious
course. But it must be ac-
knowledgeed on the other hand, that these general
Discourses do not so immediately tend to reform
the Lives of men : Because they fall among the
Croud, but do not touch the Consciences of par-
ticular Persons in so sensible and awakening a
manner as when we treat of particular Duties and
Sins,

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Sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of particular Vertues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Physician, instead of applying particular Remedies to the Distemper of his Patient, should entertain him with a long discourse of Diseases in general, and of the pleasure and advantages of Health; and earnestly persuade him to be well; without taking his particular Disease into consideration, and prescribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we must take to task the great and common disorders of their Lives, and represent their faults to them in such a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning Vices of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-speaking*; by which men contract so much guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others: And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For *who is he*, saith the Son of Sirach, *that hath not offended with his tongue?* Eccclus. 19. 16. *In many things*, saith St. James, James 3. 2. *we offend all: And if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

But how few have attain'd to this perfection? And yet unless we do endeavour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to Religion is vain: So the same Apostle tells us, James 1. 26. *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.*

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For the more distinct handling of this Argument, I shall reduce my Discourse to these *Five Heads*.

First, I shall consider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it consists.

Secondly, I shall consider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To speak evil of no man*.

Thirdly, I shall shew the Evil of this practice, both in the *Causes* and *Effects* of it.

Fourthly, I shall add some further Considerations to dissuade men from it.

Fifthly, I shall give some Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I shall consider *what this Sin or Vice of evil speaking, here forbidden by the Apostle, is: μὴ βλασφημεῖν*, not to defame and slander any man, not to hurt his reputation, as the *Etymology* of the word doth import. So that this Vice consists in saying things of others which tend to their disparagement and reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things said be true or not. If they be false, and we know it, then it is downright *Calumny*; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*; and so much the more injurious, because really groundless and undeserved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: And it is a fault to say the evil of others which is true, unless there be some good reason for it besides: Because it is contrary to that charity and goodness which *Christianity* requires, to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity or some other very good reason for it.

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Again, It is *Evil-speaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the *Text*, whether we be the first Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; because the man that is evil spoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we speak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed seems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *reviling*: The latter is more mean and base, and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Backbiting*.

And Lastly, Whether it be done directly and in exprefs terms, or more obscurely and by way of oblique insinuation; whether by way of downright reproach, or with some crafty preface of commendation: For so it have the effect to defame, the manner of address does not much alter the case: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot less faulty: For many times the deepest Wounds are given by these smother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking questions, *Have you not heard so and so of such a man? I say no more, I only ask the question*: Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to say what they have heard of such a one, are very sorry for it, and do not at all believe it, if you will believe them*: And this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to suspect the worst.

These and such like Arts, though they may seem to be tenderer and gentler ways of using mens reputation, yet in truth they are the most malicious and effectual methods of Slander; because they insinuate something that is much worse than is said, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a strong belief of something that is very bad, though they know not what it is: So that it matters not in what fashion a Slander

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is dress'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminish his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the *Text*.

II. We will consider *the extent of this Prohibition to speak evil of no man*; and the due bounds and limitations of it. For it is not to be understood absolutely, to forbid us to say any thing concerning others that is bad. This in some cases may be necessary and our duty, and in several cases very fit and reasonable. The Question is, In what Cases by the general Rules of Scripture and right Reason we are warranted to say the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reason and necessity; as, for the prevention of some great evil, or the procuring of some considerable good to our selves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of Sirach, Eccl. 19. 8. *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canst without offence reveal them not*; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canst conceal them, divulge them not.

But because this may not be direction sufficient, I shall instance in some of the principal Cases wherein men are warranted to speak evil of others, and yet in so doing do not offend against this Prohibition in the *Text*.

First, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the person of whom evil is spoken. In such a case we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be so fit for us to use that boldness and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably

bably make no other use of this discovery but in order to his amendment. And this is so far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the best testimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindness to give him the opportunity of vindicating himself: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Case the Son of *Sirach* adviseth to reveal men's faults; *Ecclus. 19. 13, 14, 15. Admonish a friend, says he, it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: Admonish a friend, it may be he hath not said it; and if he have, that he speak it not again: Admonish a friend, for many times it is a slander; and believe not every tale.*

But then we must take care that this be done out of kindness, and that nothing of our own passion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in such a manner as if we did it to shew our *authority* rather than our *charity*. It requires a great deal of address and gentle application so to manage the business of Reproof, as not to irritate and exasperate the person whom we reprove, instead of curing him.

Secondly, This likewise is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witness concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuser, unless the publick good, or the prevention of some great evil should require it. And then the plain reason of the thing will sufficiently justify a voluntary accusation: otherwise it hath always among well-manner'd People been esteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and
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the ill character we give of any man be spread no further than is necessary to the good end we designed in it.

Besides these more obvious and remarkable Cases, this Prohibition doth not I think hinder but that in ordinary conversation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be; Or that one friend may not in freedom speak to another of the miscarriage of a third person, where he is secure no ill use will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or speaking ill of others: And the less we do it, though without any malice or design of harm, still the better; because this shews that we do not feed upon ill reports and take pleasure in them.

These are the usual Cases in which it may be necessary for us to speak evil of other men. And these are so evidently reasonable that the Prohibition in the *Text* cannot with reason be extended to them. And if no man would allow himself to say any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in these and the like Cases, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III^d. place to consider *the evil of this practice*, both in the *Causes* and the *Consequences* of it.

First, We will consider the *Causes* of it. And it commonly springs from one or more of these evil Roots.

First, One of the deepest and most common *Causes* of *evil-speaking* is *ill-nature* and cruelty of disposition: And by a general mistake *Ill-nature* passeth for *Wit*, as *Cunning* doth for *Wisdom*; tho in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far distant as *Vice* and *Vertue*. And

a forward Informer concerning the misdemeanors of others. *Magistrates* may sometimes think it fit to give encouragement to such persons, and to set one bad man to catch another, because such men are fittest for such dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidents.

But when a man is call'd to give testimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in such Cases, he is so far from deserving blame for so doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, It is lawful to publish the faults of others in our own necessary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal another's faults without betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to suffer himself to be defamed to save the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and though a man had never so much goodness, he would first secure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other men's. We are to love our neighbour as our selves; so that the love of our selves is the Rule and Measure of our love to our neighbour: And therefore *first*, otherwise it could not be the Rule. And it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would rise thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

Fourthly, This also is lawful for caution and warning to a third person, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by reposing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or suspicion of his bad qualities: But even in this case we ought to take great care that
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And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Mankind, than the general proneness of men to this Vice. For (as our *Saviour* says) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* And therefore men do commonly incline to the censorious and uncharitable side: which shews humane Nature to be strangely distorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it self in *Satyr* and *Censure*, than in *Praise* and *Panegyrick*. When men set themselves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and straining; and if any thing be fitly said in that kind, it doth hardly relish with most men: But in the way of *Invective*, the Invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more easie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abused, not considering how soon it may come to his own turn to lie down and make sport for others.

To speak evil of others, is almost become the general entertainment of all Companies: And the great and serious business of most Meetings and Visits, after the necessary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to sit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sauce* of Conversation, and all Discourse is counted but flat and dull which hath not something of *piquancy* and sharpness in it against some body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are secretly pleas'd with ill reports, and drink them in with greediness and delight: Though at the same time they have so much Justice, as to hate those that propagate them; and so much Wit, as to conclude that these very persons will do the same

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same for them in another Place and Company.

But especially, if it concerns one of another *Party*, and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Case, all Parties seem to be agreed that they do God great service in blasting the Reputation of their Adversaries: And tho they all pretend to be *Christians*, and the *Disciples of Him* who taught nothing but *kindness* and *meekness* and *charity*; yet it is strange to see with what a salvage and murderous disposition they will flie at one another's Reputation and tear it in pieces: And what-ever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to bespatter one another in the most bitter and slanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adversaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections do they raise against it? and with what coldness do they at last admit it? *It is very well, say they, if it be true: I shall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard so much good of him before. You are a good man your self; but have a care you be not deceived.*

Nay it is well, if to balance the matter, and set things even, they do not clap some infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that so the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other side, every man is a good and substantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one sort of men, though all are to blame in this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To speak impartially, the *Zealots* of all Parties have got a *scurvy Trick* of lying for the Truth.

But of all sorts of People, I have observed the *Priests* and *Bigots* of the Church of *Rome* to be the ablest in this way, and to have the strongest Faith for a lusty Falshood and Calumny. Others will
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bandy a false Report, and toss it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would so hug a Lye and be so very fond of it. They seem to be described by St. *John* in that expression in the Revelation, *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lye.*

Another shrewd sign that *ill-nature* lies at the root of this *Vice* is, that we easily forget the good that is said of others, and seldom make mention of it; but the contrary sticks with us, and lies uppermost in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occasions: And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjust, many times when we do not believe it our selves we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true.* But in the mean time we give it our *Pass*, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of those into whose hands it comes.

Secondly, Another Cause of the commonness of this Vice is, that many are so bad themselves, in one kind or other. For to think and speak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man. Our *Blessed Saviour*, speaking of the evil of the *last days*, gives this as the reason of the great decay of Charity among men; *Because iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold, Matth. 24. 12.* When men are bad themselves, they are glad of any opportunity to censure others, and are always apt to suspect that evil of other men which they know by themselves. They cannot have a good opinion of themselves, and therefore are very unwilling to have so of any body else; and for this reason they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be some justification of them if they can but render others as bad as themselves.

Thirdly, Another source of this Vice is *Malice* and

and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Passion they do not consider what is true, but what is spiteful and mischievous; and speak evil of others in revenge of some injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Passions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they speak be true or not. Nay many are so *Devilish*, as to invent and raise false Reports on purpose to blast mens Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. James tells us that the slanderous Tongue is set on fire of Hell: And the Devil hath his very Name from Calumny and false Accusation; and it is his Nature too, for he is always ready to stir up and foment this evil spirit among men: Nay, the Scripture tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuse good men before God; as he did Job, charging him with Hypocrisie to God himself; Who, he knows, does know the hearts of all the children of men.

Fourthly, Another Cause of evil-speaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obscures them, and that their commendable qualities do stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their Vertues may not scorch them. This makes them greedily to entertain, and industriously to publish any thing that may serve to that purpose, thereby to raise themselves upon the Ruins of other men's Reputation: And therefore as soon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they presently go to send it abroad by the first Post: For the string is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible swiftness, through City and Country; for fear the innocent man's justification should over-take it. *Fifthly*,

Fifthly, Another Cause of evil-speaking is *Impertinence* and *Curiosity*; an itch of talking and meddling in the affairs of other Men, which do nowise concern them. Some persons love to mingle themselves in all businels, and are loth to seem ignorant of so important a piece of *News* as the *faults* and *follies* of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of discourse in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of something better to talk of, and because their Parts lie chiefly that way.

Lastly, Men do this many times out of *wantonness* and for *diversion*. So little do light and vain men consider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jested withal; and that a slanderous Tongue bites like a *Serpent*, and wounds like a *Sword*. For what can be more barbarous, next to sporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation, which to some men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleasure which some men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themselves; and this only to divert themselves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this sort of men to distracted persons; *As a mad man*, saith he, *who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*; the LXX. render it, *So is the man that defameth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport?* Such, and so bad are the Causes of this Vice. I proceed to consider, in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Consequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves*.

First, To *Others*; the Parties I mean that are slandered. To them it is certainly a great injury,

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and commonly a high *Provocation*, but always matter of no small *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*, and if the evil which we say of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all possible reparation. And though we should do our utmost endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; because the Vindication seldom reacheth so far as the Reproach, and because commonly men are neither so forward to spread the Vindication, nor is it so easily received after ill impressions are once made. The solicitous Vindication of a man's self is, at the best, but an *after-game*; and for the most part a man had better sit still, than to run the hazard of making the matter worse by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more, That it is an Injury that descends to a man's Children and Posterity; because the good or ill Name of the Father is derived down to them; and many times the best thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemish'd Virtue and Worth: And do we make no Conscience to rob his innocent Children of the best part of this small Patrimony, and of all the kindness that would have been done them for their Father's sake, if his Reputation had not been so undeservedly stain'd? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blast a man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Posterity? Can we make a jest of so serious a matter? Of an Injury so very hard to be repented of as it ought, because in such a Case no Repentance will be acceptable without Restitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it; and if we do it not, will be our Ruin in the other.

I will put the Case at the best, that the matter of the Slander is true; yet no man's Reputation is considerably stained, tho never so deservedly, without
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great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by passing through several hands is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add something to it.

But, besides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the consequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and desperate Quarrels. This reason the wise Son of *Sirach* gives why we should defame no man: *Whether it be*, says he, *to a friend or to a foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and observed thee*, *Ecclus. 19.8,9.* that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge, and when the time cometh he will shew his hatred; that is, he will take the first opportunity to revenge it.

At the best, it is always matter of Grief to the person that is defam'd: And *Christianity*, which is the *best-natur'd Institution* in the World, forbids us the doing of those things whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit even of a wise and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more sensible is he of this hard usage; because he never treats others so, nor is he conscious to himself that he hath deserved it.

Secondly, The *Consequences* of this Vice are as bad or worse to *our selves*. Whoever is wont to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those whom he desires to please; who, if they be wise enough, will conclude that he speaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themselves, no man could be so blind as not to see this.

And it is very well worthy of our consideration, which our *Saviour* says in this very Case, That *with what measure we meet to others, it shall be measured to us again*; *Matth. 7.* and that many times *heaped up, and running over*. For there is hardly any thing wherein

Mankind do use more strict justice and equality, than in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing.

Nay, Revenge often goes further than Words. A reproachful and slanderous Speech hath cost many a man a *Duel*, and in that the loss of his own Life, or the Murther of another, perhaps with the loss of his own Soul: And I have often wonder'd that among *Christians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

And tho neither of these great mischiefs should happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whose kindness and good-will he may come to stand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own safety and quiet, he ought to refrain from evil-speaking. *What man is he, saith the Psalmist, that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good: Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falshood, Psal. 34. 12, 13.*

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over us from God. If we allow our selves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. James expressly tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain, Jam. i. 26.* And St. Paul puts Slanderers and Revilers amongst those that shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And our Blessed Saviour hath told us, *That by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned, 1 Cor. 6. 10.* To which I will add the counsel given us by the *Wise-man*, *Refrain your tongue from backbiting, for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought, and the mouth that slandereth slayeth the Soul, Wisdom of Solomon, c. i. v. 11.* I proceed in the

IVth place, to add some further Arguments and Considerations to take men off from this Vice: As,

First, That the use of Speech is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and bestowed upon

on him for some excellent end and purpose : That by this *Faculty* we might communicate our thoughts more easily to one another, and consult together for our mutual comfort and benefit : Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The *Psalmist*, as by *Interpreters* is generally thought, calls our *Tongue* our *Glory* ; therewith we praise God and bless Men. Now to bless is to speak well of any, and to wish them well. So that we pervert the use of *Speech* and turn our *glory* into shame, when we abuse this *Faculty* to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, Consider how cheap a kindness it is to speak well, at least not to speak ill of any. A good word is an easie obligation, but not to speak ill requires only our Silence, which costs us nothing. Some instances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and necessities of others : The expence deterrs many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never so covetous, he might afford another man his good word ; at least he might refrain from speaking ill of him : especially if it be consider'd how dear many have paid for a slanderous and reproachful word.

Thirdly, Consider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good-will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one desires such a man's friendship, and is apt to repose a great trust and confidence in him : And when he is dead, men will praise him ; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteousness to Men, nothing is thought a more significant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to speak ill of any. It was a singular Character of a *Roman Gentleman*, *Nescivit quid esset maledicere*, he knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.

Fourthly, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and consider how himself is apt to be affected with this usage. Speak thy Conscience Man, and say whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldst

not be glad to have every man's, especially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd, and not to be hardly spoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by those whom thou didst never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reason dost thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been so contrary? Nothing surely is more equal and reasonable than that known *Rule, What thou wouldst have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man.*

Fifthly, When you are going to speak reproachfully of others, consider whether you do not lie open to just reproach in the same, or some other kind. Therefore give no Occasion, no Example of this barbarous usage of one another.

There are very few so innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wisest, and most virtuous, and most perfect among men have some little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the railery of a mimical and malicious Wit: Therefore we should often turn our thoughts upon our selves, and look into that part of the *Waller* which men commonly fling over their shoulders and keep behind them, that they may not see their own Faults: And when we have searched that well, let us remember our *Saviour's Rule, He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.*

Lastly consider, That it is in many Cases as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great necessity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not bestow a small Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this purpose; *Talk not of other men's lives: If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burst thee, Ecclus. 19. 10.* I shall in the

Vth. and last place, give some Rules and Directions for,

for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

First, Never say any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. When ever you positively accuse and endite any man of any Crime, though it be in private and among Friends, speak as if you were upon your Oath, because God sees and hears you. This not only Charity, but Justice and regard to truth do demand of us. He that easily credits an ill Report is almost as faulty as the first inventer of it. For tho you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a Lye. Therefore never speak evil of any upon common Fame, which for the most part is false, but almost always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in most Cases, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be so: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abstain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with some Persons, and to gain this point of them however; because it would retrench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-speaking* that is in the World.

Secondly, Before you speak evil of any man, consider whether he hath not obliged you by some real kindness, and then it is a bad return to speak ill of him who hath done us good. Consider also, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be ashamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reason also to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Consider likewise, whether in the change of Humane affairs, you may not some time or other come to stand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a spiteful and needless word by a shrewd turn? So that if a man made no conscience of hurting others, yet he should in prudence have some consideration of himself.

Thirdly, Let us accustom our selves to pity the Faults of men and to be truly sorry for them, and then we shall take no pleasure in publishing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, considering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our selves also are liable to be tempted: Considering likewise, how severe a Punishment every Fault and miscarriage is to it self; and how terribly it exposeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Christian*, that is not heartily sorry for the faults even of his greatest Enemies; and if he be so, he will discover them no further than is necessary to some good end.

Fourthly, When-ever we hear any man evil-spoken of, if we know any good of him let us say *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to stand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuse and bespatter them. Possibly the good you heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: However, it is better to preserve the credit of a bad man, than to stain the Reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man should be evil-spoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities should be mention'd together; otherwise he may be strangely misrepresented, and an indifferent Man may be made a Monster.

They that will observe nothing in a Wise man, but his over-sights and follies; nothing in a Good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a shift to render a very wise and good man very despicable. If one should heap together all the passionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the best Man; all that he had said or done amiss in his whole Life, and present it all at one view, concealing his Wisdom and Vertues; the Man in this Disguise would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*: And yet

yet if his Life were fairly represented, and just in the same manner it was led; and his many and great Virtues set over-against his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Person. But how many and great soever any man's ill Qualities are, it is but just that with all this heavy load of Faults he should have the due praise of the few real Virtues that are in him.

Fifthly, That you may not speak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *Busy-bodies*, and those that love to talk of other mens Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them because of their Quality, then divert the discourse some other way; or if you cannot do that, by seeming not to mind it, you may sufficiently signify that you do not like it.

Sixthly, Let every man mind himself, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do but endeavour in good earnest to mend thy self, and it will be work enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionysius*, who would fain have had a famous *Philosopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in some unkindness, and *Dionysius* bad him not to speak ill of him when he was return'd into *Greece*; *Plato* told him, *he had no leisure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of so bad a man, so notoriously known to all the World.

Lastly, Let us set a watch before the door of our lips, and not speak but upon consideration: I do not mean to speak *finely*, but *fitly*. Especially when thou speakest of others, consider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to speak: Use great Caution and Circumspection in this matter: Look well about thee; on every side of the thing, and on every Person in the Company, before thy words slip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not

Not that men should be fullen in company, and say nothing; or so stiff in conversation, as to drop nothing but *Aphorisms* and *Oracles*: Especially, among Equals and Friends, we should not be so reserved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchsafe to say any thing. If a Man had the understanding of an *Angel*, he must be contented to abate something of this excess of *Wisdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Conversation, if any body can hit upon it, seems to be this; an appearing freedom and openness, with a resolute reservedness as little appearing as is possible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we should consider well what we say, especially of others. And to this end we should endeavour to get our minds furnished with matter of Discourse concerning things useful in themselves, and not hurtful to others: And, if we have but a Mind wise enough, and good enough, we may easily find a Field large enough for innocent Conversation; such as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiser part of Mankind: And why should any one be at the cost of playing the fool to gratify any body whatsoever?

I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to speak to upon this Argument. But because hardly any thing can be so clear, but something may be said against it; nor any thing so bad, but something may be pleaded in excuse for it: I shall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

First, Some pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the same kind, it seems thou art sensible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughtest to abstain from it: But in what kind soever it be, the Christian Religion forbids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuse of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

Secondly, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this Doctrine were practised, Conversation

sation would be spoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleasant discourse and entertainment.

I answer, The design of this Discourse is to redress a great evil in Conversation, and that I hope which mends it will not spoil it. And however, if men's Tongues lay a little more still, and most of us spake a good deal less than we do, both of our selves and others, I see no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and see many good days. *David*, I am sure, prescribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-speaking; *Psal. 34. 12, 13. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falsehood.*

But granting that there is some pleasure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Imnocence*: And the more any man considers this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are serious, we ourselves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himself impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind and wish he had not done them. For this certainly is one necessary qualification for the *Blessed Sacrament*, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconsistent.

Thirdly, There is yet a more specious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can escape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place: Because by this means one great restraint from doing evil would be taken away, which these good men who are so bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the displeasure of God, will yet abstain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from Men; Besides, that

that this seems the most proper punishment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not seem so good and laudable a way to punish one Fault by another. But let no man encourage himself in an evil way with this hope, that he shall escape the censure of men: When I have said all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-speaking enough in the World to chastise them that do ill: And tho we should hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wish we could but be persuaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be sufficiently lash'd for their Faults, tho we fate by and said nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good Men should be concern'd in this odious Work. There will always be Offenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the *Executioners* to inflict this punishment upon one another. Therefore let no man presume upon Impunity on the one hand; and on the other, let no man despair but that this business will be sufficiently done one way or other. I am very much mistaken, if we may not safely trust an ill-natur'd World that there will be no failure of Justice in this kind.

And here, if I durst, I would fain have said a word or two concerning that more publick sort of *Oblaquy* by *Lampoons* and *Libels*, so much in fashion in this witty Age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible sort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be said without offence, that how much soever men are pleas'd to see others abused in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn: However I cannot but hope that every man that impartially considers must own it to be a fault of a very high nature to revile those whom God hath placed in Authority over us, and to *slander the footsteps of the Lord's Anointed*: Especially since it is so expressly written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the Rulers of thy People.*

Having

Having represented the great evil of this Vice, it might not now be improper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occasions for the future; and so turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making so good an use of it: And then it will be well for us to have been evil spoken of.

Are we innocent? We may so much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the Pattern of our *Blessed Saviour, Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

We may consider likewise, that tho it be a misfortune to be evil-spoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore should not put us into Passion, because another man's being injurious to me is no good reason why I should be uneasy to my self. We should not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much less upon our selves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to lose thy Patience. Be not such a fool, as to part with any one Virtue because some men are so malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the rest. When men speak ill of thee, do as *Plato* said he would do in that case; *Live so, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been said, and to urge you and my self to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practise what we so plainly see to be our Duty. Many are so taken up with the deep *Points* and *Mysteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of human Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are so far from clashing with one another, that the *Christian Religion* hath made them inseparable. True *Faith* is necessary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the one never ought to be press'd to the prejudice of the other.

I fore-

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I foresee what will be said, because I have heard it so often said in the like case ; that there is *not one word of Jesus Christ in all this*. No more is there in the *Text*. And yet I hope that *Jesus Christ* is truly preach'd, whenever his *Will* and *Laws*, and the *Duties* enjoin'd by the *Christian Religion* are inculcated upon us.

But some men are pleas'd to say, that *this is mere Morality*: I answer, that this is *Scripture-Morality* and *Christian-Morality*, and who hath any thing to say against *that* ? Nay , I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Christian Religion*, who lives in the neglect of so plain a *Duty* ; and in the practice of a *Sin* so clearly condemn'd by it, as this of *evil-speaking* is.

But because *the Word of God* is *quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged Sword*, yea sharper than *Calumny* it self; and pierceth the very *Hearts* and *Consciences* of men, laying us open to our selves , and convincing us of our more secret as well as our more visible *Faults* ; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God*.

And I have purposely reserv'd this to the last, because it is more persuasive and penetrating than any *Humane Discourse*. And to this end be pleas'd to consider in what company the *Holy Ghost* doth usually mention this *Sin*. There is scarce any *black Catalogue of Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among them ; in the company of the very worst *Actions* and most irregular *Passions* of men. Out of the heart, says our Saviour, Matt. 15. 19. proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false witness, evil speakings. And the Apostle, Rom. 1. 29. ranks backbiters with fornicators, and murderers, and haters of God ; and with those of whom it is expressly said, 1 Cor. 6. 10. that *they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*.

And when he enumerates the *Sins of the last times*, 2 Tim. 3. 2, 3. Men, says he, shall be lovers of themselves,

selves, covetous, boasters, evil-speakers, without natural affection, perfidious, false accusers, &c. And which is the strangest of all, they who are said to be guilty of these great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apostle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for so it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profession of *Christianity*, and yet at the same time to live in a most palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion*: As if any pretence to *Mystery* and I know not what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of *Christ*, could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and set them above the Virtues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* so frequently rank'd with *Murder* and *Adultery* and the blackest Crimes; such as are inconsistent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly shut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God*? and can we allow our selves in the common practice of a Sin, than which there is hardly any Fault of mens Lives more frequently mention'd, more severely reprov'd, and more odiously branded in that *Holy Book*.

Consider seriously these *Texts*, *Psal. 15. 1. Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our Saviour says, that of every idle word we must give an account in the day of Judgment; that by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd? What can be more severe than that of *St. James*? *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The Sin which I have now warned men against, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God*;

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God ; and the *Duty* which I have now been persuading you to , is easy for every man to understand, not hard for any man, that can but resolve to keep a good guard upon himself for some time, by the grace of God to practice ; and most reasonable for all *Men*, but especially for all *Christians*, to observe. It is as easy as a *resolute silence* upon just occasion, as reasonable as *prudence* and *justice* and *charity*, and the preservation of *peace* and *good-will* among men, can make it ; and of as necessary and indispensable an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Considerations let us every one of us be persuaded to take up *David's* deliberate Resolution, *Psal. 31. 1. I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we should soon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this *Vice*, together with those that are nearly allied to it, and may at the same time, and almost with the same resolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many considerable Vertues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection ; it being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conscience of his *Words* should not take an equal or a greater care of his *Actions*. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reason of that saying of *St. James*, and with which I shall conclude : *If any man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect man.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will ; working in you always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through *Jesus Christ* ; To whom be glory for ever, *Amen.*

A



THE
Arch-Bishop of YORK's
SERMON

About the
Government of the Thoughts,
Before the
King and Queen,

At White-hall, March iv. 169 $\frac{1}{4}$.

THE
ANNALS OF 1834
SERMON

By the
Governor of the Province
of the
King and Queen

Published by
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A
S E R M O N

About the
Government of the Thoughts,

Preach'd before the
KING and QUEEN,

A T
WHITE-HALL;
The 4th of *March*, being the 2d
Sunday in L E N T, 1694.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
J O H N Lord Arch-Bishop of York.

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SERMON

By the

KING and QUEEN

WHITE HALL

The 11th of March, being the 3d
Sunday in Lent, 1661.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
JOHN BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

Preached at the Chapel of the
White Hall.



S E R M O N

About the

Government of the Thoughts,

Preach'd before the

King and Queen.

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of Life.

THE Argument with which this Audience was entertained the last Lord's Day, being the *Government of the Tongue*; I cannot think it improper or unreasonable for me, who have the Honour to come next, to treat about the *Government of*

the Thoughts : There being a near relation between these two, and a necessary dependence of the one upon the other.

Our *Words* indeed are more easily governed than our *Thoughts*, because they are more in our Power. But it will be impossible either to govern our *Words* or our *Actions*, as we should, unless we first bring our *Thoughts* in some measure under Government.

I must confess this Argument of the Government of the *Thoughts*, though it be a very useful, yet it seems also a very nice and difficult one, through the great variety of Cases, arising from Mens different Tempers, which will not come under the same Rules, and yet ought to be provided for. But however, this shall not discourage me from undertaking this Argument; it shall only make me more careful as to what I say about it. That is, to have respect, as much as I can, to all sorts of Tempers, and to deliver what I have to say with so much Plainness, that every body may go along with me.

The *Words*, upon which I ground my Discourse, are those of *Solomon*, which I have read unto you, and which contain one of those Precepts that he lays down for the Religious Conduct of our Lives. *Keep (saith he) thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of Life.*

Not to trouble you with what others have said upon this Text, I take the true Meaning of it to be this.

By

By the [*Heart*] here, which we are exhorted to *keep*, we are to understand the *Inward Thoughts* and *Motions*, and *Affections* of our Souls or Spirits; all which in the inspired Writings are constantly said to be seated in the *Heart*. This undoubtedly is the Scripture-Notion of the *Heart*.

And when we are here bid to *keep our Hearts with all diligence*, I think there is no question to be made, the Meaning is, That we should diligently attend to the Thoughts and Motions, and Affections of our Minds; that we should watch them narrowly, lest at any time we should give our Consent to something we ought not. This is the Meaning of *keeping our Hearts with all diligence*.

And then a Reason is added, why it concerns us thus to keep them. And that is this. *Because out of the heart are the issues of life*. What is the Meaning of that Phrase? Plainly this. The Issues, the Fruits, the Effects that are shewn in our Lives and Conversation, do certainly proceed from the Heart, and therefore, accordingly as that is well or ill guarded or kept, so will our Lives and Conversations be. The Goodness or Badness of our Lives doth altogether depend upon the attending or not attending to the *Thoughts*, and *Motions*, and *Inclinations* of our Minds. As our Caution and Watchfulness in this Point is greater or less, so will our Course of Life be better or worse. And therefore it concerns

us all, that mean to live well, to be infinitely careful in this Matter.

This is a plain Account of the Advice that is here given us. So that you see, if I mean to discourse pertinently to my Text, my Argument must be (what I said) the Care, and Management, and *Government* of our *Thoughts*, as they fall under a Religious Consideration.

In treating of this Argument there seem to me *Two Things* needful to be done,

First, To give an Account what Power a Man hath over his own *Thoughts*.

Secondly, To shew wherein the Art of *Governing* of them doth consist.

It is indeed this *second* thing which my Text naturally leads me to speak to: But I cannot speak to that to any purpose, till I have made way for it by clearing the *first*. It is in vain to give Rules about the *Government* of our *Thoughts*, till we know how far we have Power over them; how far they fall, or do not fall, under our Conduct and Management.

And I must needs say, that most of those I have met with, that have discours'd about the *Government* of *Thoughts*, by not enquiring into, and settling this Point, have been so far from benefiting all their Hearers, that desired to receive benefit by their good advices, that to several of them they have done
harm;

harm : Because as to them their advices have been perfectly unpracticable. Now those that by their own Experience found them to be so, instead of considering that that Teacher might be in a mistake, or that He did not sufficiently weigh and examine the Case of all Persons he gave his advice to, have peremptorily concluded that they themselves were in the fault, and therefore they were in an evil condition, because they found themselves not able to live up to what was advised them.

The *first* Question then is, How far a Man hath power over his own Thoughts. There is not indeed any single Answer to be given to this Question, that will fit all Men. For that is impossible. It would be as unreasonable to demand it, as it would be to require of a Workman to make a Garment, that should fit all sorts and sizes of Men.

Some Men by the very Principles of their Make and Constitution, are much better able to govern their Thoughts than others. Some that are naturally weaker, have by long use and many tryals obtained a greater power over their Thoughts than others. Again, the same Persons that at some times have a greater power over the motions of their Minds, may at other times have a less Command over them; and this according as their Health, or their Business, or a hundred Contingencies of outward things do affect them. So that all that can be done, as to this matter, is to lay down

down some general Propositions, which every Body is to apply to himself as there is Occasion. And Five of this kind I have to offer, and which, I think, will take in all, or the greatest part of what belongs to this Argument.

The first Proposition I lay down is this, That the first Motions of our Minds are very little, if at all, in our power.

By the first Motions of our Minds, I mean those sudden Thoughts, or Apprehensions, or Passions, or Desires, which are excited in our Minds by any Object that is at that time presented to our Imagination. As to these, I say, we are not so much Masters of our selves as to be able to stop them; nay, though perhaps they be very irregular. And the Reason is, because they are produced so quick, that there is not time enough given for Reason to interpose.

There is no necessity indeed that a Man should give Consent to these Motions; but as for their coming into his Mind, he can no more help it, than he can help his present Temper, or the present Circumstances he is engaged in.

Thus for Instance. Do you think it possible for a Man that is of a Fiery Passionate Temper, to avoid the feeling a sudden Resentment of Anger arising in his Mind, if he meets with any unexpected Affront, or other great Provocation? Or for a Man that desires

to be well thought of, nor to entertain some Vanity of Imagination, when he hears himself commended or flattered? Or for a Man that is addicted to Pleasures, not to feel some irregular Inclinations in himself towards the gratifying his Apperites in those things, when he hath all the Temptations before him? And thus in all other Cases.

I grant indeed that a Man by long Consideration, and a serious exercising himself in the ways of Vertue and Piety, may bring himself to that Temper, that he shall not have so many irregular undecent Motions in his own Mind, upon any occasion whatsoever, as he was wont to have; and that those that were formerly Temptations to him, will at last be none. But still I say, the first Motions and Workings of his Mind however they be occasioned, are in a great measure out of his power; he cannot stop them; and therefore the Art of governing his Thoughts doth not lye there.

The second Proposition I lay down is this, When a Man's Mind is vigorously affected and possessed, either with the outward Objects of sense, or with inward Passions of any kind, in that Case he hath little or no Command of his Thoughts. His Mind at that time will be in a manner wholly taken up with that in which it is then full of. Nor will he be able, till those Impressions be worn off, to think freely of what he pleaseth.

Thus

Thus for Instance, VVhen a Man is under a sharp, tormenting Pain; as he cannot avoid the *feeling* of that Pain, so neither can he avoid the *thinking* of it. VVhen one is full of Grief for the loss of a dear Relation; or transported with Passion for some unworthy usage he hath met with: It is in vain to say, Pray think not of these Matters; for these things must and will in a great measure imploy his Thoughts, till his Passions do cool, and the Impressions that caused them be vanished.

Thus for a Man to come from some Business in which he is more than ordinarily concerned; or from the hearing some very good or very bad News; I say, to come fresh from this to the saying his Prayers: I do not, I cannot wonder, that in this case his Mind will be much upon his *Business*, or his *News*, notwithstanding all his Endeavours to the contrary.

For the Nature of Man is such, that he cannot so of a sudden turn his mind from one *Business* to another; but that if he did closely and vigorously apply himself to the first *Business*, his Thoughts will for some time run upon it, even after he hath applied his Mind to the other.

I do not deny, but that a Man may often so order his Affairs, as to be able to keep his Mind clear and free from such Prepossessions as I am now speaking of, so as that when he comes to apply himself to any *Business* he hath

hath a mind to, he may intend it with his whole Might. But this I say, If our Minds be once engaged with warm Thoughts about any thing; it is very hard, if not impossible, to get them disengaged on a sudden. So that the *Art of Governing our Thoughts* doth not much lie in that neither.

Thirdly, There are some Cases likewise, where a Man's Thoughts are in a manner forced upon him, from the present Temper and Indisposition of his Body. So that though he be in no Passion, though there be no unusual Objects of Sense that excite those Thoughts in him; nay, though he never so much resolve not to think upon those things; yet so long as that Habit of Body lasts, he cannot avoid those kind of Thoughts: So that in this Case also, there is little room left for the *Government of Thoughts*.

That which I now say, happens frequently, not only in all sorts of Distempers where the Brain is visibly disturbed, as in Feavers, and the like; which often cause a thousand delirious Fancies, and sometimes down-right Madness and Distraction: But also in other Cases where there seems to be no Feaver, or other visible Distemper; nor doth the Brain, as to other matters, seem to be at all disorder'd; but the persons, in all appearance, are sound both in Body and Mind.

And this is the Case of some deeply *Hypochondriac* Persons; many of which will be haunted

haunted with a *Sent of Thoughts* and *Fancies*, that they can by no means get rid of, though they desire it never so earnestly.

Sometimes they cannot get it out of their Heads, but that they are *Atheists* and *Infidels*; they neither believe in God nor in Jesus Christ, nor have any sense at all of Religion.

Sometimes they are tormented with *Blasphemous Thoughts*, and they cannot set themselves to the Performance of any Office of Devotion, but a thousand impious Fancies will come in and spoil all.

Sometimes they fancy they are guilty of several grievous Crimes, which it is to be hoped, it was hardly possible they should be guilty of; nay, you cannot convince them but that they do every day commit some of these Crimes, because they imagine they give consent to them.

And whilst these sorts of Thoughts fill their Imaginations, there is not a Passage in the Bible that they read, nor a Sermon that they hear, but they find something in it, which they do so perversely apply to their own Case, as thereby to increase their trouble, but not to get any relief.

I have known several well-disposed Persons, and some of them sincerely Pious, that have been in this Condition.

What now is to be said to this? Why, it is very certain that all these Thoughts and Fancies are thrust upon them, and are not the free,

free, natural, voluntary Operations of their own Minds ; but the effects of Vapours or Hypochondriac Melancholly. Nor can the Persons themselves any more help their thus Thinking, or Fancying, than they can help the Disturbances of their Dreams when they have a mind to sleep quietly. Indeed we may properly enough call these *Fancies* of theirs, their *waking Dreams* ; as their *Dreams* are their *sleeping Fancies*.

Well but now of all Persons whatsoever, these People are most desirous to have *Rules* given them for the Government of the Thoughts. And I cannot blame them, because their Thoughts are certainly very Troublesome. But truly if we would speak pertinently to their Case, instead of giving them *Advices* for the regulating their *Thoughts*, they should rather be advised to look after their *Bodies*, and by the help of good Prescriptions to get rid of those *Fumes* and *Vapours* which occasion these *Fancies*. When the Cause is removed, the Effect will soon cease. I do not in the least doubt, whatever these People may think of their own Case, but that this is as properly a *Bodily Disease*, as a *Fever*, or *Fits* of the *Falling Sickness*.

In the mean time, while they are in this Condition, whatever *Rules* are proper to be given to other Persons for the Government of the Thoughts, of all People living those *Rules* do the least concern them. For those Thoughts
which

which they complain of, do not at all fall under Regulation or Government; because they are suggested to their Minds whether they will or no. And for my part, I think it a great deal more advisable (if it could be) to neglect and despise them; than to be perpetually struggling and disputing with them, and vexing themselves about them.

But, you will say, if Men be such Slaves to their *Thoughts*, and are thus necessarily passive under them, where is the Freedom of *Thoughts*? To this I answer,

In the fourth place, out of these three Cases I before mentioned, we have *Liberty of Thinking*, and may chuse our own *Thoughts*. And that Liberty and Freedom we have in *Thinking*, doth, to my apprehension, mainly consist in this, viz. That all of us (who are not in the Circumstances I have been hitherto speaking of) can, if we please, apply our Minds more vigorously to one sort of thing than to another; and accordingly as we do thus apply our Minds, so will the most of our *Thoughts* be.

It is in our power among the multitude of Objects which present themselves to our Mind, (as for Instance, God, *Vertue*, *Holiness*, *Heaven*, *Wealth*, *Power*, *Greatness*, *Preferments*, *Fine Clothes*, *Splendid Equipage*, *Sensual Pleasures*, *Recreations*, *Diversifements*, *Knowledge*, *Learning*, *Arts*, and the like: I say, that among all this multitude of Objects that pre-
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sent themselves to our Minds) it is in our power to determine our selves, which of them we will dwell upon, and make a *Business* of. And accordingly, when at any time we have pitched upon any of them, as a *Business*, it is in our power to mind that *Business*, either more or less diligently. And if it be such a one, as that we mean in good earnest to concern our selves about it, it will then so fill our Minds, as that by attending to that, we shall either prevent in a great measure other Thoughts from coming into our Heads; or if they do come in, they will not long stay there, but will very speedily give place to that which is our main *Business* at that time.

And the Reason of this is plain; Because our Natures are of that Make, that two things at once cannot well possess our Minds; and therefore if we be intent about one thing, we cannot have much room or leisure for Thoughts of another Nature.

But then *Fifthly* and lastly, Though this that I have said be the true Nature of that power we have over our Thoughts, as to the directing them to a particular Object: Yet there is another power we have over them that ought here more especially to be considered; because in it are laid the very Foundations of *Vertue* and *Vice*, and upon account of it, all our Thoughts become either morally good or evil.

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That which I mean is this. Though we cannot in many Cases, think always of what we would ; nay, though we cannot hinder abundance of Thoughts from coming into our Minds against our will : Yet it is always in our power to assent to our Thoughts, or to deny our Consent to them. And here it is that the *Morality* of our *Thoughts* begins. According as we *Assent* or *Dissent* to the *Motions* that are made in our Minds ; so will our *Thoughts* have the *Notion* of *Vertuous* or *Sinful* Thoughts.

When any Temptations are presented to us from without, we cannot perhaps (as I said before) avoid the feeling an irregular Passion, or Motion, or Inclination stirring within us upon occasion thereof : But yet at that very time it is in our power, whether we will comply with those Passions and Inclinations, or not ; whether we will consent to them, or not ; whether we will pursue them further or not. Now if we do not consent to them, but endeavour to stop, and stifle, and resist them as soon as we are aware of them ; there is yet no harm done. Our *Thoughts*, how undecent or irregular soever they were, are rather to be accounted the *Infirmities* of our *Corrupt* Nature, than our *Sins* properly so called.

And thus it is likewise as to our *Wandering Thoughts* in our *Prayers*. If we strive against them, and endeavour to keep our Minds in a
Devout

Devout Composed Temper, and attend as well as we can to the Duty we are about : I say, if we do this, I hope those *Distractions* and *Wanderings* will never rise up in Judgment against us.

And as for the frightful *Blasphemous* Fancies, which, as I told you, some, even Pious Persons are tormented with : As to them, I say, they, of all other irregular *Thoughts*, have the least danger of Sin in them, though they be not so solemnly and formally disputed with, and contested against. Because indeed they are so terrible in their own Nature, that no Man in his Wits, and that hath any sense of God or Goodness, can be supposed to consent to them. They are indeed great *Infelicities*, but by no means any *Sin*, any farther than we approve of them ; and to approve of them for any tolerably good Man is impossible.

But then on the other side, If we consent to any wicked Motion or Inclination that we feel in our selves ; let it come in how it will, never so suddenly, never so unexpectedly ; if we close with any *Thought* that prompts us to Evil, so as to be pleased with it, to delight in it, to think of pursuing it, till it be brought into Action : In that case we are no longer to plead our *Original Corruption* ; for in that very instant we become *Actual Sinners*, Actual Transgressors of the Law of God, the Obligation of which reaches to our very Hearts

and Thoughts as well as our Actions. Tho^y yet we are not so great Transgressors, so long as our Sin is only in Thought, or Desire, or Purpose ; as if it had proceeded to outward Action.

All this is taught us for true Divinity, by no less an Author than St. James, in the first Chapter of his *Epistle*, v. 13, 14, 15. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God tempteth no man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.*

Which passage of the Apostle doth plainly contain these three Propositions.

First, That no Man is drawn to commit Sin by any State or Condition that God hath put him into ; no, nor by any Temptation, either outward or inward, that is presented to him. It is not a Sin to be tempted ; no, nor to feel that we are tempted by some disorderly Inclination that arises in our Minds thereupon.

But, *second*, then our Sin begins, when we yield to the Temptation, when we are drawn away by our own Lusts, and enticed, when they get the Victory over us, and we do consent to them. Then *Lust hath conceived, and bringeth forth Sin.*

But, *Thirdly*, Though the very consent of our Wills to a Temptation, be a Sin in us ; yet

yet that Sin is not so great as it will be afterwards, if it be brought to Action. Sin in the desire or purpose, is but an *Embryo* ; it is but the first Rudiments of Sin ; but when it comes to be acted, it is then a Sin in its full dimensions ; and the Consequents of it may be Fatal without Repentance. *Sin when it is finished bringeth forth Death.*

Having thus given some Account, how far our *Hearts* or *Thoughts* do fall under *Government* ; I now come to my *Second Point*, that is, to treat of the *Art of Governing them*, or to lay down the necessary *Rules* and *Directions*, which are to be observed in order thereunto.

And we shall not need to go far for these *Rules*, for they will all naturally flow from the Principles I have already laid down. And I think, they may conveniently enough be reduced likewise to these *Five* following.

First, From what hath been said, it appears, that the *First* and great Point to be done by us, if we would keep our *Hearts* in a good Frame, and order our *Thoughts* to good purposes, is, that we rightly pitch our main Designs ; that we chuse that for the great Business of our Lives, that really ought to be so.

Now what that is, can bear no dispute with any Man that will fairly use his Reason. For certainly, that which is our greatest Concernment in the World, ought to be our greatest Business and Design in the World.

And it is evident to every one, that believes he hath a Soul to save, that his greatest Concernment of all, is, to approve himself to that God who made him, and disposes of all his affairs; and who accordingly as we sincerely endeavour, or not endeavour to serve him, will make us either very Happy, or very Miserable, both in this Life and the other. So that there can, as I said, be no Dispute about what ought to be the great Business and Design of our whole Lives, and to which all other Businesses must yield.

Now if we be so wise, as really to propose this as our main End, and resolve to mind it, and follow it as such; I say, if we be so wise as to do this; we have made a very great step towards the obtaining a security to our selves, that the greatest part of our Thoughts, and Desires, and Affections, will be such as they should be; such as will be acceptable to God, and satisfactory to our selves.

For as I told you before, whatever is our main Business, be it what it will, it will, in a great measure, draw all our Thoughts to it. Our Natures are so contrived, that we must always be thinking of some thing or other. But then they are so contrived likewise, that we think most of that, which is most in our Eye, most in our Esteem, most in our Pursuit. And this is that which our Saviour tells us; *Where your treasure is, there will*

will your heart be also. Whatever it be that you place your Happiness in, upon that will your Thoughts run ; upon that will your Desires, your Inclinations, your Affections, be fixed.

We have a VWorld of Instances of the truth of this every day before our Eyes. If a Man hath set his heart on *Money*, and proposeth it to himself, as the *Business* of his Life, to be Rich : VVhy, I dare say, such a one will own to you, that most of his Thoughts are upon that Project ; and that he finds it so far from being difficult to keep his Mind close and steady to his *Main Interest*, as he calls it ; that it is rather difficult to him to think of any other Matters. :

If a Man be given up to *Pleasure*, and thinks nothing worthy his living for, but VVine and VVomen, and good Eating and good Company ; Is it not natural to such an one to bend all his Thoughts that way ? Or doth he put any force or violence upon himself, in thinking and contriving all the day long, how to bring to pass the Gratification of his Lusts or his Appetites.

VVhy, my *Brethren*, if we did all of us in good earnest make the Service of God, and the purchasing Heaven and Happiness to our selves, as much our Business, our End, our Design, as these Men make VVealth or Pleasure to be theirs, we should certainly be thus affected. The common Course of our Thoughts,

would naturally and easily, without the least constraint, run upon those Objects : And we should take as great delight in Thinking of *our* Treasure, and Contriving for the obtaining of it ; as they do in Thinking and Projecting for theirs.

I say, Thus it would be with us. For I cannot for my Life apprehend, what Charms there can be in Worldly or Sensual Things, to attract a Man's Mind ; what Fetters there can be in them, to *bind his Thoughts*, and tye them to themselves : But that there are the same, or greater, in Vertue and Goodness ; in the Love and Favour of God ; in a Pure Conscience here, and Eternal Glory hereafter : Always provided, that they are as much made the Objects of our Choice and Pursuit, as the other.

And therefore I cannot but suspect, where we see Men so very cold and backward to Spiritual Things ; and so apt to spend all their Thoughts upon trifling, vain, or worldly Matters, that it is with a great deal of Pains and Reluctancy, that they can bring themselves to think of their Everlasting Concernments : I say, I cannot but suspect that these Persons have not yet *laid up their Treasure in Heaven*, as our Saviour expresseth it ; they have not yet so wholly devoted themselves to the Service of God, as to make it their *Main Business*. When once they have done that, I dare assure them, they will find it so far from

from being a force upon them, to think of good things, that it will be very natural to them; and they will find the greatest Pleasure in the World in so doing.

Secondly, Whoever would keep his *Heart* always in a good Frame, and be able to give a good Account of his Thoughts to God, must have an especial care to avoid two things, *viz.* *Idleness* and *loose Company*. For both of these do strangely unhinge a Man's Mind; and disarm it of that Severity, which is its best guard and defence against Evil Thoughts; and make it become an easie prey to every Temptation that will attack it.

A wise Man should never be at such a pass, as to say, *I have nothing to do, I do not know how to spend my next Hour*: But should so order the Course of his Life, that all the Portions of his Time, as much as is possible, may be filled with some useful, or at least some innocent Employment.

It is *Idleness*, and having nothing to do, that is, the Mother of most of those vain, and unprofitable, and sinful Fancies, in which some Men spend their days. And whereas Temptations do now and then come in the way of other Men; the *Idle* Man is forced to seek out Temptations for the shipwreck of his Vertue. And therefore no wonder, if he that seeks them, finds abundance of them.

And truly *Loose* and *Impertinent Conversation*, which was the other thing I named, though

though it looks something with a better Grace, yet is not much better than Idleness. For where-ever it is much used, it will so emaculate a Man's Mind, and take off the edge and vigour of it, as to serious things, that he cannot easily get it into a good Frame again. *Evil Communication* (saith St. Paul) *doth corrupt good Manners*. And therefore those people, a great part of whose Life is taken up in gadding up and down ; in Play ; in merry Meetings ; in telling or hearing idle Stories, and the like : It is impossible but their Thoughts and Inclinations, and the whole Frame of their Hearts will be suitable ; that is to say, very frothy ; very light and foolish ; not to say, profane, and wicked, and Atheistical too, if the Company they much converse with, be of that strain.

Thirdly, Another thing of great moment, for the *keeping our Hearts*, is, to be as attentive as is possible to the *first Motions* of our Minds ; and whenever we find that they tend toward something that is forbidden, to stop them as soon as we can.

We cannot, as I told you before, often prevent irregular Desires, or Passions, or Inclinations, from arising in our Minds, upon sundry occasions. But this we can do : As soon as we are aware of them, we can refuse our Consent to them ; (and in that case I hope they will not be imputed to us as Sins ;) Nay, not only so, but we can refuse their breaking

breaking out, or shewing themselves in our Words, or our Actions. For the Motions of our outward Members are all at our Command, though the first Motions of our Minds be not.

Here therefore will lye a main Point in the Art of well governing our Minds and Thoughts. You cannot perhaps, for instance, prevent a sudden Passion of *Anger* from rising in your Minds upon *twenty* Accidents: But as soon as you feel this Passion, you can thus far stifle it; you can seal up your Mouth, so that the Passion shall not vent it self in unseemly Words; And if you will withdraw that Fuel from the new-kindled Fire, it will soon be extinguished, and die. Whereas if you suffer it to break out in bitter Speeches and Expressions, it will flame beyond measure.

Thus again, If any undecent, impure Fancies or Desires should be excited in you upon any occasion: It was not perhaps in your power to keep them from coming into your Minds: But it is in your power to withdraw from the Temptation that caused them; and to endeavour to direct your Thoughts to some other Object; at least not to proceed one step in any outward Action towards the accomplishing of those Desires. If you take this Course, the Disturbance of your Mind will soon cease, and you will return presently to your ordinary Temper.

And

And let me tell you this further ; That by your being thus careful to resist and smother the first beginnings of Sin ; you will not only preserve, in a great measure, the Innocency of your Minds under the present Temptation ; but you will also have this farther advantage, that by this means, you increase your Power over your Thoughts, against the next time that the Temptation returns. Every check you give to the first motions of Sin, makes the next assault of them the less furious. And if you do constantly use your selves, thus to Guard and Watch over your Hearts ; you will in time obtain such a Command over them, that you will not be troubled with a quarter of those irregular desires, and passions, which heretofore upon several Occasions used to be kindled in you. By this Method you will strengthen your Faculties, and enlarge your Powers ; and by degrees bring your selves to that happy Temper of Soul, that there will be no great War between the *Law* of your *Members*, and the *Law* of your *Minds* : But the *World* and the *Flesh* will be *Crucified* to you, as you are to them ; that I may use St. Paul's Expressions.

But then *Fourthly*, That you may be able not only to keep *bad* Thoughts out of your Minds ; but also to have a constant spring of *good* ones ; there are some particular *Exercises* very proper for this purpose to be recommended. Such I mean as these, *Converse*
with

with discreet and pious Persons; Reading good Books, especially the *Holy Scriptures*; taking times of *Meditation* and *Recollection*; and above all, *Fervent* and *Constant Prayer to God*.

It is not to be told how every one of these things doth help to inspire us with good Thoughts and Purposes.

A little passage now and then, though but occasionally dropt in a Conversation, that is to the business of *Vertue* and *Goodness*, will supply us some times with matter for good Thoughts for a considerable while after. What lasting Impressions then, do you think, would be left upon our Minds, if we made it our constant Exercise every day, to read or hear something out of the *Bible*, or some other good Book, with a design to grow Better thereby?

But above all things, we must take care to be diligent and serious in our Applications to the Throne of Grace: It is *Hearty Prayer* and *Devotion*, that when all is done, will prove the most Effectual Means, for the keeping our Hearts steady to that which is Good, and securing them from the pollutions of the sensible Earthly Objects that do surround us.

O therefore let us be constant in our Religious Offices. Nay, let us take every opportunity that our Affairs will allow us, of raising our Minds to God, and thanking him for his Infinite Love and Goodness to us; and imploring the continual Influences of his Grace
and

and Holy Spirit, and re-inforcing our Vows and Purposes of persevering in his Service.

By this means we shall come to lead Spiritual Lives indeed. Our Souls will be a perpetual Fountain of Good Thoughts. And while we live here, our Conversation will be in Heaven. For God and Christ, and the things above will have our *Hearts*, though the World hath our *Bodies*.

But then, in the *Fifth* and last place, Notwithstanding what I have hitherto said, concerning the *Diligence* with which we are to keep our *Hearts*; yet this is always to be remembered, That with our *Diligence* we must be careful to join *Discretion*.

My Meaning is this, We must have a care not to *intend* our Thoughts immoderately, and more than our Tempers will bear, even to the best things: But we must so keep our *Hearts*, as at the same time to preserve our *Healts*, and keep up the Vigour of our Minds.

And the way to do that, is, Not to put them too much, or too long, upon the stretch at any one time: But to relax them when there is occasion, and to let them run out, and entertain themselves upon any thing that comes next to hand, so long as it is Innocent.

It is a vain thing to imagine, that we can always be thinking of our great Business; or that we can always be a Praying, or Reading, or Meditating; or, that, as our Con-
dition

tion is in this World, even the greater part of our *Thoughts* should be such as we call *Devout and Religious Thoughts*.

God hath provided a great deal of other Business for us to apply our Minds to, so long as we live in this World. And by minding that diligently and conscientiously, we do serve God as acceptably, as if we were Reading or Praying.

Nay even then, when we have no urgent Business upon our hands to take up our Minds, it is not necessary that we should be always thinking of Religion. Nor would I call every Thought, a *vain*, or an *idle*, or a *sinful* Thought, that hath not God, or our Spiritual Concernments for its Object. Even the most Spiritually-minded among us, must oftentimes be content to be entertained with such *Thoughts* as our Company, or our Temper, or the present Circumstances we are in, do suggest to us. And provided those *Thoughts* be innocent, and do not intrench upon the Laws of *Piety*, and *Purity*, and *Charity*; be they otherwise very trifling and impertinent: I say, I would not look upon them as *ill Thoughts*, nor have any one angry at himself upon account of them.

The truth of it is, So long as we consist of Bodies and Souls, we cannot always be thinking of serious things. They indeed are the Wisest that think of them most, but it is even dangerous to attempt to think of them always.

For,

For, as most Mens Constitutions are; that is the ready way to spoil the Habit of our Bodies, and by that means to render our Minds perfectly unfit for *Thinking* at all to any good Purposes.

Thus have I laid before you the Main Things wherein, as I do believe, the right *Governing our Thoughts* doth consist. And I doubt not, they are so safe, and so effectual, that whosoever will sincerely practise them, as far as he can, will so keep his *Heart*, that the *Issues* from thence in his *Life* and *Conversation* will be Happy and Prosperous. I conclude all with the *Collect* of this Day.

Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of our selves to help our selves; Keep us both outwardly in our Bodies, and inwardly in our Souls; that we may be defended from all Adversities which may happen to the Body, and from all EVIL THOUGHTS which may assault and hurt the Soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

F I N I S.



